

Epidemiologist Tabatha Offutt-Powell Recognized As “Community Star” in Conjunction With National Rural Health Day 2019

DOVER – On the third Thursday of each November, the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH), leads National Rural Health Day, shining a light on those who serve the vital health needs of the estimated 57 million people living in America’s rural communities. Each of the nation’s 50 State Offices of Rural Health (SORH) belongs to NOSORH. In Delaware, the SORH is the Office of Primary Care and Rural Health within the Division of Public Health (DPH).

SORHs provide support to rural hospitals, clinics, and first responders in several ways, including technical assistance, funding that supports workforce development, population health management, quality improvement initiatives, and more. Beginning in 2015, NOSORH invited its SORH members to nominate Community Stars – hospital and emergency first responder teams, community health, and volunteer service heroes on the front lines of rural health who were making a positive impact on rural lives. Annually, NOSORH publishes the names and stories of selected persons for each state in their online book of Community Stars. NOSORH announces the awardees on National Rural Health Day, which this year is Nov. 21, 2019.

Dr. Tabatha Offutt-Powell, State Epidemiologist and Chief of the Epidemiology, Health Data and Informatics section of DPH, was nominated and selected to appear in the 2019 edition in part for her work to spearhead the development of Delaware’s [My Healthy Community](#) data portal. My Healthy Community,

launched in May 2019, allows Delawareans to access information about the overall health of their communities. The data portal delivers neighborhood-focused population health, environmental and social determinant of health data to the public, and allows users to navigate the information at the smallest geographic area available, and understand and explore data about the factors that influence health.

Throughout her tenure at DPH, Dr. Offutt-Powell has collaborated closely with the Office of Primary Care and Rural Health and the Delaware Rural Health Initiative (DRHI) to identify needs, compile data, and to present it in a format that rural health care advocates could easily understand. DRHI includes representatives from DPH and the three southern hospital systems: Bayhealth, Beebe Healthcare and Nanticoke Health Services. The DRHI was created as a collaborative vehicle for addressing shared regional health concerns in a more coordinated manner and to develop an organized and strategic approach to improving the health of Sussex County residents.

“It’s an honor to represent Delaware and receive this award on National Rural Health Day,” said Dr. Offutt-Powell. “As an epidemiologist, my passion is to work with data to understand factors that influence health and translate the data into information that can be used to affect change. I am excited to see the progress that we’ve made to share data with Delawareans that will help them create actionable change in their communities. I have an amazing team of dedicated public health professionals that helped make this accomplishment possible.”

“The Division of Public Health is thrilled to see Dr. Offutt-Powell’s hard work and accomplishments recognized on a national level,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “We are so proud of the work she does every day to improve the lives of Delawareans. Not only does the My Healthy Community data portal contribute to rural health innovation, education,

collaboration and communication, it also helps build capacity for rural data-driven program planning and decision making by rural health advocates.”

Dr. Powell’s story along with those of all 50 state awardees is available on the PowerofRural.org website, the official hub for NRHD. For the first time since its inception, a limited number of Community Star books will also be available for purchase. PowerofRural.org also contains free tools, ideas and details about NRHD events occurring across the United States. For more information about DRHI, visit <https://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/chca/ruralhlthinit.html>. To view data on My Healthy Community, visit <https://myhealthycommunity.dhss.delaware.gov/>.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person’s spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware’s citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.